

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SANA 02323 170519Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 /073 W
-----123257 181235Z /53

R 161250Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4738
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY JIDDQ
3571
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T SANA 2323

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, YE
SUBJECT: ASNAJ: BITTER DILEMMAS
LEGIN SUMMARY: YAR FORMIN ASNAJ, IN CAUSTIC MOOD,
TALKS ABOUT YEMEN'S DELEMMAS OF LEADERSHIP AT TIME WHEN
SOVIET THREAT TO YEMEN IS GROWING. END SUMMARY.

1. IN TALK WITH ME ON MAY 15 ABDALLAH AL-ASNAJ DROPPED
INTO BROODING MONOLGUE ABOUT PROBLEMS YEMEN HAS IN FACING
UP TO SOVIET THREAT. HE WAS AS BITTER AND CAUSTIC AS I
HAVE EVER SEEN HIM, AND WAS UNABLE DESPITE HIS CONSIDERABLE
POWERS OF ANALYSIS TO OFFER ANY GOOD SOLUTIONS TO
DILEMMAS HE SEES.

2. HE STARTED BY REFERRING TO RATHER BOORISH ATTEMPT OF
SOVIET AMBASSADOR, IN FRONT OF ASSEMBLED DIPLOMATIC
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 SANA 02323 170519Z

CORPS, TO INSIST ON INTERVIEW WITH ASNAJ. "I DON'T WANT
TO TALK TO HIM. HE KNOW IT. WHAT I WANT IS TO GET
THE SOVIETS OUT. I KNOW THEIR PLANS FOR YEMEN. IT'S TO
BE JOINED TO THE SOUTH, WHICH THREW ME OUT. THEIR
FRIENDS IN ADEN WOULD KILL ME TOMORROW IF I WEREN'T A
MINISTER."

3. I SUGGESTED THAT YEMEN HAD A CHOICE TO MAKE IN THE NEXT MONTHS. IF THEY WERE WORRIED ABOUT SOVIETS, THEY COULD REDUCE THEIR PRESENCE HERE OR TRY AS IN PAST TO ACCOMMODATE THEM.

4. ASNAJ SAID QUICKLY THAT HE WANTED SOVIETS OUT. HE HAD ALREADY THROQC MUT NOVOSTI CORRESPONDENT "ON MY OWN," HE SAID, REFERRING TO EVENT OVER EIGHT MONTHS AGO, BEFORE HAMDI ASSASSINATION.

5. BUT WE DO NOT WANT TO BECOME "ANOTHER AFGHASNISTAN" ASNAJ WENT ON. IF THE SOVIETS ARE EVICTED, "WHO WOULD FILL THE FACUUM? THE SAUDIS VR THE WANT THE SOVIETS OUT. THEY EXPECT US TO THROW THEM OUT NOW. BUT THEY COULDN'T INTERVENE HERE TO SAVE THE SITUATION EVEN IF WANTED TO. THEY COULDN'T EVEN GET THE ROYAL FAMILY TOGETHER FOR A MEETING. AND WHAT ABOUT THE US? WOULD YOU HELP? ASNAJ CLEARLY DISMISSTED THE IDEA. I THOUGHT TO MYSELF OF WHAT AHMED ABDO SAID HAD SAID TWO DAYS EARLIER. "A SMALL POWER LIKE YEMEN CANT'T AFFORD TO OPPOSE THE SOVIETS."

6. THEN, REVERTING TO THE SAUDIS, ASNAJ SAID HE DIDN'T REALLY THINK THAT THEY HAD A LONG TERM POLICY TOWARD YEMEM. "THEY'RE CONCERNED WITH PERSONALITIES AND THE SHORT TERM."

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 SANA 02323 170519Z

7. I SAID THE SAUDIS PLAINLY INTENDED TO INCREASE THEIR ASSISTANCE TO THE YAR MILITARY. "IT WON'T DO ANY GOOD," HE SAID. "THE PROBLEM IS THE PEOPLE IN THE MILITARY. THEY HAVE NO LOYALTY, NO DISCIPLINE, NO TRAINING. THEY ARE RAW TLD CRUDE. THEY COULD NEVER STAND UP TO THE SOUTH EVEN THOUGH WE OUTNUMBER THEM AND ARE GOOD FIGHERS. AN OFFICER IN THE YEMEN ARMY," HE FINISHED UP, "IS SOMEONE WHO...3-'AND HERE HE TILTED HIS HEAD BACK, WATCHING ME NARROWLY, AND PRETENDED TO DRAW ON A CIGARETTE, IN A SLICK MIMIC OF A GANGLAND FILM.

8. "DOES SOVIET TRAINING HELP?" I ASKED. "NO," SAID ASNAJ. "THE SOVIETS HAVE FAILED. LIKE THE EGYPTIANS AND JORDANIANS. IF THE PAKISTANIS COME, IT WILL BE THE SAME. THE MATTER NEEDS TIME AND BASIC EDUCATION."

9. "IS THE SOVIET PRESENCE A FORM OF INSURANCE?" I ASKED. ASNAJ SHOOK HIS HEAD. "I OPPOSED THE TRIP OF YAR CHIEF OFSTAFF ALI SHAYBA TO MOSCOW. THEY WOULD JUST PUT PRSSURE ON HIM. THEY'RE UP TO SOMETHING

HERE. I FEEL IT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT BUT WE MUST NOT
BECOME ANOTHER AFGHANISTAN."

COMMENT: ASNAJ CLEARLY CONSIDERS ALL POLICY OPTIONS
TO CONTAINING GROWING SOVIET THREAT FROM SOUTH TO BE UN-
PALPABLE, BUT IN THIS INTERVIEW HE WAS OBVIOUSLY
REFLECTING CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL DISCONTENT AS WELL.
HE HAD BEGUN THE INTERVIEW BY SAYING HE REALLY DIDN'T
FEEL WELL. HE SAID HE WANTED TO GO BACK TO THE
CLEVELAND CLINIC FOR A CHECKUP. "THERE IS A BLOCKAGE
IN MY HEART, YOU KNOW," HE SAID. "THE DOCTORS SAID
IT WOULDN'T REQUIRE SURGICAL INTERVENTION IF I LOST WEIGHT
AND AVOIDED TENSION. HOW CAN ANY AVOID TENSION
IN YEMEN? AND I AM GAINING WEIGHT." ASNAJ YUBAD
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 SANA 02323 170519Z

HEALTH COMPLICATES A CONSIDERABLE FEAR ON HIS PART OF
ASSASSINATION BY HIS HATED PEERS IN SOUTH YEMEN, BUT
HIS PERSONAL CONCERNS OBVIOUSLY REFLECT HIS DIMINISHED
POLITICAL POSITION IN THE GHASHMI REGIME. "I DON'T HAVE
MUCH INFLUENCE WITH GHASHMI," SAID ASNAJ. "BASINDWA
DOES--IT WAS THE OPPOSIT WITH HAMD. " THOUGHTOUT
THE INTERVIEW HE WAS OFFHAND ABOUT GHASHMI, WHOM HE
INSISTED ON CALLING "THE CHIEF," RATHER THEN THE PRESIDENT.
PERHAPS BECAUSE OF GHASHMI'S TRIBAL ORIGINS. "ONCE THE
CHIEF GETS THE IDEA IN HIS HEAD ABOUT SOMEONE," SAID
ASNAJ, "ITS HARD TO CHANGE HIS MIND." "I DON'T
KNOW IF THE CHIEF WANTS ME TO BE FOREIGN MINISTER IN
THE NEXT GOVERNMENT. THE CHIEF LISTENS TO A LOT OF
PEOPLE BUT HE BELIEVES IN--WAT DO YOU CALL IT: THE
STARS, YES, ASTROLOGY." IF GOVERNMENT IS ANNOUNCED
ON MAY 20 WITH ASNAJ ONCE AGAIN FOREIGN MINISTER, AS
PRIME MINISTER TOLE ME ON MAY 15, ASNAJ'S MOOD WILL
PROBABLY CHANGE. IF SO, IT MAY BE WE WILL WANT TO
TALK TO HIM AND OTHERS IN YEMENI GOVERNMENT OVER THE
NEXT MONTH ABOUT THEIR POLICY OPTIONS VIS-A-VIS THE
SOVIET UNION AND SOUTH YEMEN. I ASSUME IT IS OUR
FIXED DESIRES TO PERSUADE THEM TO TAKE POSITION TO
CONTAIN THE SOUTH AND REDUCE THE SOVIET PRESENCE
HERE WHILE ATTACKING SOVIET AND RADICAL ACTIVITIES IN
THE HORN.
RANSOM

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, INTERVENTION, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SANA02323
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780209-0530
Format: TEL
From: SANA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780554/aaaabtit.tel
Line Count: 162
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9d473e9c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2677349
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASNAJ: BITTER DILEMMAS LEGIN SUMMARY: YAR FORMIN ASNAJ, IN CAUSTIC MOOD, TALKS ABOUT YEMEN'S DELEMMAS OF LEADERSHIP AT TIME
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, YE, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9d473e9c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014